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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PHNOM PENH 000637

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS, PRM, AND DRL  
BANGKOK FOR REFCOORD TIM SCHERER  
GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM VN CB](#)  
SUBJECT: CAMBODIA: REPATRIATION OF 32 MONTAGNARDS MOSTLY  
QUIET, ONE FORCED INTO CAR BY POLICE

REF: PHNOM PENH 590

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1. (SBU) Summary: An involuntarily repatriation proceeding of 32 Montagnard persons took place in a mostly quiet manner and without disruption during the early morning of August 1. In contrast to the repatriation that took place on July 18 (reftel), there was no protest during the August 1 proceeding. Several journalists observed the departure from outside of the UNHCR site. Poloff also monitored the proceeding. However, one Montagnard person adamantly refused to leave; it was not until after the official deportation proceeding was complete and Poloff and journalists had left that the police physically removed him from the site and into a car headed for the Vietnam border. UNHCR observers and police reported that no assault or physical injury took place during his removal, but we are disappointed we did not have the opportunity to observe ourselves. End summary.

Repatriation Relatively Quiet -- No Demonstration  
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2. (SBU) In the early morning hours of August 1, 31 Montagnard individuals left on a bus, involuntarily repatriated to Vietnam. All but two of the individuals had arrived at UNHCR in Phnom Penh after May 1, 2007. Compared to the repatriation and demonstration on July 18, the August 1 proceeding was relatively quiet. A few minutes before the bus of deportees left, Poloff heard persons in Site 1 bang momentarily on metal parts of the site structure and make some shouting noises. UNHCR reported that the noise was quieted by police sending officers inside. Poloff did not observe police entering Site 1 and did not hear more noise from the site. According to Ministry of Interior Deputy Director of Internal Security Sovann, the police verbally calmed the group in Site 1 by explaining to them they were not involved with the repatriation from Site 2.

One Montagnard Forced Into Car  
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3. (SBU) Minutes after the bus departed Site 2 -- where individuals who have been determined not to be refugees are housed, UNHCR staff reported to Poloff that one of the 32 individuals had adamantly refused to leave, and that UNHCR and the MOI decided not to force him to go. At this point, Poloff left the site, as reportedly did all of the journalists. UNHCR told Emboffs later that four police officers put the individual -- named Siu Thai -- into a car rented by the MOI. Three UNHCR staff and MOI Deputy Director Sovann witnessed the movement of Siu Thai into the car and

reported that no assault or beating took place. Police then reportedly escorted Siu Thai to the Vietnam border where he was met by Vietnamese officials along with the other 31 Montagnard individuals.

#### MOI Acted To Avoid Demonstration

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¶4. (SBU) In the days before the repatriation, the Cambodian Ministry of Interior temporarily transferred Montagnard individuals who were not scheduled for repatriation out of UNHCR Site 2 to Site 3. Sites 1 and 2 are adjacent to one another, and are where the demonstration took place two weeks ago. Site 3 is located on a different street. UNHCR reported that there were no disturbances while the individuals were transferred from Site 2 to Site 3. There have also been no reports of Montagnard persons "running away" out of the sites since the July 18 demonstration.

#### Two Pre-May 1, 2007 Arrivals Repatriated

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¶5. (SBU) Two of the Montagnard individuals -- Ksor H'Nut and her daughter Ksor H'Ai -- arrived at UNHCR in Cambodia before May 1, 2007, and had therefore been referred to the U.S. for consideration for U.S. resettlement despite having been determined not to be refugees by UNHCR. According to UNHCR Phnom Penh, the two pre-May 1, 2007 arrivals were denied U.S. resettlement by DHS/CIS in early April 2008. Later in April, they filed a Request For Review (RFR) of the decision with DHS, which was also denied in early June. The other 30 Montagnard persons arrived after May 1, 2007.

#### Comment

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¶6. (SBU) While the Montagnard persons were boarding the bus for Vietnam, Voice of America and Phnom Penh Post photographers were taking many photos, noticeably irritating the police and other Ministry of Interior officials. As Poloff is not authorized to enter the site without advance written permission from the MFA, the MOI officials still agreed to keep open the door to the site despite their irritation with the press. In Poloff's opinion, the press asked questions with a notable slant that the police and UNHCR were doing something wrong. However, the MOI keeping the doors of the site open offered a window for all who care to see that the departure took place calmly and without violence, and without apparent inappropriate behavior by officials. In response to a VOA inquiry to the Embassy today, post responded that the security and protection of Montagnard individuals who have fled Vietnam to seek asylum in Cambodia has been one of the highest priorities of this Embassy, and Embassy officials observe repatriations from the UNHCR sites to ensure that the departures are conducted in accordance with UNHCR and Cambodian procedures.

MUSSOMELI